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France Plans Largest Maneuvers In West Germany Since the War

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PARIS, Jan. 8 — The Government announced today that it planned to conduct its largest military maneuvers since World War II in West Germany next year.

Officials said the maneuvers were intended to test the ability of France's new 47,000-man Rapid Action Force to come to West Germany's defense in the event of an attack by the Warsaw Pact. They will involve a total of 150,000 soldiers, 90,000 of them from France and the rest from West Germany.

Western diplomats and military analysts here said they welcomed the planned maneuvers as another indication of the gradual evolution under way in French military thinking, as planners quietly shelve the old Gaullist doctrine that France's forces are reserved for the defense of French territory and instead accept their involvement in any European conflict from its onset.

"These will be the most important ground exercises since the last world war," Defense Minister Paul Quiles said in announcing the maneuvers. French and Germany military commanders will plan the exercises this year, he added.

Stresses 'Solidarity'

Mr. Quiles stressed France's "solidarity" with West Germany on security matters. He said the Rapid Action Force, set up by the Socialist Government in 1983 to intervene quickly in crises, was intended for use in "Central Europe, if the need is there," as well as in other regions "where France's interests are threatened."

The Defense Minister also pointed to the Government's decision two years ago to move the French III Corps headquarters from near Paris to Lille, close to the Belgian frontier, as further evi-

dence of its readiness to aid allies if they are attacked.

"France is completely ready to talk about European defense and to move beyond talking to facts," Mr. Quiles said.

After repeating President François Mitterrand's offer to take a minor stake in the four-nation project to build a West European fighter plane, he said, "French and German forces are cooperating more closely every year in the fields of intelligence gathering, logistics, communications, electronic warfare and military medicine."

Summit Meeting Next Week

The announcement of the maneuvers appeared to be timed to Mr. Mitterrand's scheduled meeting with Chancellor Helmut Kohl next week at Baden-Baden, where France forces in West Germany are based. They are also believed to be designed to deflect accusations by the conservative opposition that the governing Socialists have damaged France's traditionally close links with West Germany.

As the campaign for the March parliamentary elections gets under way, the opposition parties cite the collapse of plans for a joint tank, France's refusal to join fully in the West European fighter project and differences over President Reagan's "Star Wars" missile defense project.

Since Mr. Mitterrand came to power in 1981, French military policy has been evolving in a more European direction. The opposition parties also appear to be abandoning their adherence to de Gaulle's insistence on total independence, which led him to withdraw France from the integrated military command of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.